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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
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Summary record of the 1409th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 8 July 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Hayashi

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of France (CEDAW/C/FRA/7-8 and Add.1; CEDAW/C/FRA/Q/7-8 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of France took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Rossignol** (France), introducing the State party's eighth and ninth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/FRA/7-8), said that the principle of gender equality underpinned the activities and working methods of all governmental departments. Gender equality was mainstreamed into situation analyses and training of officials, and gender diversity was promoted in administrative and management positions. The public budget allocation for such measures stood at around €30 million a year, with the total amount dedicated to women's rights and gender equality standing at around €221 million a year. In addition, gender impact assessments were conducted before bills were brought forward; companies were required to meet gender equality criteria in order to win procurement contracts or renew multi-year agreements; the status of the High Council for Gender Equality, which monitored implementation of measures under the cross-cutting policy on gender equality, had been strengthened; and additional resources had been allocated to the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights. Inequalities were more readily identified owing to improvements to monitoring and evaluation systems. Moreover, communication tools were under development to raise awareness of actions carried out within the framework of the policy on gender equality.

3. A network of 130 representatives for women's rights, coordinated by the Department of Women's Rights and Equality, ensured that the policy on gender equality was implemented throughout the country. The representatives worked in cooperation with stakeholders at the grass-roots level and ensured the participation of civil society in awareness-raising. The gender and development strategy for the period 2013-2017 ensured that the gender perspective was taken into account in all international activities. In 2013, the State party had set aside €350 million for international projects on gender equality and, in 2014, it had allocated €256 million to reproductive health.

4. The Act on Substantive Equality between Women and Men of 4 August 2014 was fully implemented. Through the development of a raft of legislative provisions and working methods, and the cooperation and empowerment of stakeholders at all levels, significant progress had been made in the areas of education, employment, sexual and reproductive health and ending violence.

5. Legislation had been introduced to combat stereotypes and an action plan was in place to teach pupils about equality at school. In accordance with an interministerial agreement, efforts were made to ensure gender diversity in all subject areas throughout the education system. In addition, universities were required to appoint representatives for gender equality, and the gender equality charter had been signed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, under which universities undertook to adopt measures towards gender balance in academic courses and gender equality in the workplace. Employment legislation introduced in 2015 required employers to assess workplace gender equality and quality of work life. A national framework agreement had been signed with the national employment agency Pôle emploi to strengthen gender diversity in the workplace, improve job quality for women and encourage female entrepreneurship. A platform for gender diversity in professions had also been launched in 2014 that targeted key industries and trades that both lacked gender balance and generated employment.

6. Under the policy on gender equality, sexual and reproductive health care was guaranteed for all women and efforts had been made to provide better medical coverage to girls and women. Legislation had therefore been amended to facilitate women's access to abortion; a law had been introduced to ensure free contraception and counselling for girls; and a helpline had been set up to provide information on sexuality, contraception and abortion, managed by the French Movement for Family Planning.

7. High priority was given by the Government to the prevention of violence and the support and protection of women victims of violence. The interministerial plan for preventing and combating violence against women for the period 2014-2016 provided for the strengthening of follow-up and support for victims, including launching a nationwide helpline for violence against women; posting social workers in police stations to provide victims with appropriate social, legal or medical assistance; and distributing mobile phones for women who had been granted protection orders.

8. Within the framework of the public policy to combat trafficking in persons, legislation had been strengthened and a national coordinating body had been established. The definition of trafficking had been amended in line with international instruments, and the right of residence had been extended for victims of trafficking. In addition, the 2016 law on combating the prostitution system had been introduced, which criminalized the exploitation of women by prohibiting and punishing the purchase of sexual services and recognized that women involved in prostitution were not sex workers but rather victims of violence. Legislation enacted in 2015 paid special attention to asylum seekers in vulnerable situations and the reform of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons provided for specific protection of victims of trafficking and gender-based violence. Some 4,000 girls and their families had been granted refugee status owing to the risk of female genital mutilation in their countries of origin. Under the road map of the Ministry of the Interior, reception and support procedures and help with learning the language for migrant women had been improved.

9. The composition of the Government had been bound by gender parity rules since 2012. In 2014, more than 30 per cent of members of the executive boards of major companies were women. The commitment to substantive equality between men and women was also reflected in the strengthening of family policies to enable women to achieve a work-life balance and, for that purpose, 275,000 places to care for children were being set up.

10. Among the most tenacious glass ceilings that stood in the way of genuine equality were the sexist stereotypes, behaviour and language that continued to stigmatize and delegitimize women and, to that end, an interministerial agreement had been concluded to foster a culture of gender equality in the education system, strengthen teaching of mutual respect and encourage gender diversity in courses of study. Efforts were also being made to eradicate sexist stereotypes in textbooks and in the media.

Articles 1 to 6

11. **Ms. Schulz**, noting that the Convention was rarely invoked in court decisions, asked what training on the Convention was envisaged for judges, magistrates and other relevant officials, such as police and social assistants. She asked whether the possibility to take group or class action in employment cases would be extended beyond unions to women's and human rights associations; whether class action was also provided for in cases involving access to goods and services; whether ad hoc victims' groups could take action; whether the provisions of the law concerning class action could be applied retroactively; and whether class action would aim at putting an end to violations and at obtaining compensation for damages. Would funds be made available in order help women bring such action?

12. She asked whether the Government envisaged implementing the Defender of Rights' recommendations to provide for a narrower definition of discriminatory harassment in the bill on equality and citizenship and, with respect to the provisions on sexual harassment in the bill on the modernization of the justice system, to introduce civil remedies in cases of sexual harassment outside the workplace and a redefinition of the burden of proof. She asked whether the revision of certain laws would ensure full recognition of multiple discrimination in legal proceedings, whether training for legal officials would cover that concept and whether the question of multiple discrimination might be systematically incorporated into all public policies.

13. Details would be appreciated of measures taken to guarantee for refugees and asylum seekers shelter and access to care inside and outside all camps and in waiting areas along borders. She would also welcome further information on their rights and on the processing of their applications for asylum. Were they in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women? She wondered whether the Government might put an end to processing the applications of women from so-called safe countries through the accelerated procedure as a matter of course, abolish the list of those countries, which was not consistent across Europe, and establish more specific grounds for processing an application under the accelerated procedure.

14. She asked whether the local authorities were provided with adequate resources for meeting their responsibilities under the bill on equality and citizenship for the promotion of gender equality. Given the absence of statistics on ethnic and religious groups, which prevented discrimination against them from being measured, she asked whether data-collection methods might be updated through a revision of the law concerning information technology, files and freedoms. Further information would be appreciated on the collection of more detailed data disaggregated by region and sex.

15. She asked whether the gender perspective was systematically taken into consideration in strategic discussions with countries that bought weapons produced in the country. In the light of the high proportion of French arms sales to zones marked by conflict or the risk of conflict, could the effectiveness of the State party's monitoring mechanisms be guaranteed to prevent the violation of women's human rights by means of those weapons?

16. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the overriding objective of public policies on gender equality was the enjoyment of rights in practice, which was why the Act of 4 August 2014 had been entitled the Act on Substantive Equality between Women and Men. The law on consumer protection provided for class action procedures in cases involving access to goods and services and the safety of medicines and health products.

17. **Ms. Gilberg** (France) said that, while it was true that the Convention was rarely invoked before the national courts, it had nevertheless been invoked before the Court of Cassation. However, the Court had not cited the Convention to date, because the arguments put forward in applications for reviews of judicial decisions based on the Convention had not been substantiated. The possibility of invoking several articles of the Convention had been recognized in various decisions taken by the Council of State since 2001.

18. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the Government focused heavily on combating multiple discrimination, particularly that faced by women with disabilities. Training and integration measures were included in various interministerial plans to that end, such as the plan for preventing and combating violence against women.

19. **Mr. Clavreul** (France) said that at the core of all governmental policies and plans to address racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia was the resolute mission to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and combating discrimination against women was always at the

forefront. Departmental government officials working in the field of women's rights were systematically involved in national policy work. Currently, around 250 initiatives against racism and anti-Semitism at the local level were being undertaken, many of which targeted women, particularly women from migrant or minority communities, to facilitate their access to citizenship and the labour market. There were plans to include in the bill on equality and citizenship a section on defamation or insult on grounds of racial origin as an aggravating circumstance with respect to all offences of discrimination so that cases of multiple discrimination could be more effectively prosecuted in the courts.

20. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the available data collected on civil status provided adequate information on the various types of discrimination that women might encounter. In addition, the authorities were making tremendous efforts to address inequalities by requiring impact studies to be carried out in relation to all draft legislation, including planned reforms of the pension system. Ministry budgets should also take into account the impact of public spending on the situation of women. France had taken a steadfast position against requesting individuals to declare their ethnicity or race since 1945. Any resulting gaps in information were offset by in-depth studies and anonymous questionnaires designed to measure the discrimination that specific categories of the population might face on account of their cultural, ethnic or religious background. For example, a very ambitious study had been launched on violence against women in both metropolitan France and the overseas territories.

21. **Mr. Clavreul** (France) said that the Constitutional Council had ruled in 2007 that data on ethnicity were unconstitutional because they were not objective. Moreover, there was a risk of placing population groups in a category with which they did not themselves identify, in contradiction with the country's universalist approach. However, the ban on data broken down by race and ethnicity did not apply to the collection of data on religion and gender, and much research work, such as the study *Trajectoires et origines* (Paths and Origins) containing questions on the origins of respondents' parents, was available to shed light on discrimination and to better inform public policies.

22. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said that all persons in the country, including asylum seekers and persons in an irregular situation, had the right to State-funded medical assistance. All asylum seekers were given an allowance. Three quarters were housed in special accommodation or hotels and the remainder received an extra stipend to cover their housing needs. Particular attention was paid to the situation in Calais: 1,500 women had been placed in separate facilities; the health condition of migrants, especially minors, was closely monitored by civil society organizations; and teams made daily rounds of the camps to inform the migrants of their rights and encourage them to apply for asylum. In addition, a system to transfer migrants from the camps to reception and guidance centres had been set up at the end of 2015, benefiting nearly 5,000 migrants, regardless of whether or not they had applied for asylum. France had a unique procedure whereby all foreign nationals in need of medical treatment who could demonstrate that they did not have effective access to appropriate health care in their country of origin could apply for a temporary residence card for medical reasons; some 42,000 applications were submitted each year. It was the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons that ruled on granting subsidiary protection, and the list of safe countries of origin was set by the Office's board, which was independent of the Government.

23. **Ms. Doublet** (France) said that the law amending the asylum system had overhauled procedures and considerably strengthened the guarantees for all persons concerned, especially women. For instance, the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons could, if a case warranted it or a person was particularly vulnerable, reclassify asylum applications that had initially been fast-tracked and shift them to the ordinary procedure. The possibility of reclassification was available regardless of where the

application had been filed. If a person was considered particularly vulnerable, alternative, more appropriate accommodation could be provided. The Office also had the authority to reclassify countries of origin. Other safeguards had been put in place; for example, the Office's board membership had been widened to ensure equality, countries had to be considered safe for women and men alike in order to be placed on the safe country list and women's organizations could appeal to the board to remove a country from the list. While the migrant camps were illegal, they were an issue of concern for the Government, and their inhabitants were seen first and foremost as victims.

24. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that, pursuant to recent laws on decentralization, the powers of the local authorities had been more clearly defined. The local authorities were actively involved in the promotion of the various policies on equality and funded organizations whose services, for example in the area of sexual and reproductive health, complemented those provided by the State.

25. **Ms. Laurens** (France) said that France was staunchly committed to combating weapons trafficking and that there was a general legislative and regulatory framework for bans on the transfer of weapons. The sale of weapons was permitted only on the presentation of a State-issued licence whose approval process took into account a number of factors, including respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. France systematically ensured that its weapons exports were in line with its international commitments, the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, in particular article 7 (4) on gender-based violence, and relevant common positions of the Council of the European Union.

26. **Ms. Gilberg** (France) said that the bill to modernize the justice system had been submitted to the parliament and was scheduled for discussion the following week. It provided a common procedural basis for all group actions, before both the ordinary courts and the administrative courts, and covered a number of areas, such as labour relations and access to goods and services. Logically, group actions would be possible for acts that predated the law's eventual entry into force, the date of which was not yet known. Parties to a group action would be entitled to compensation. Regarding the burden of proof, she said that group actions differed from class actions insofar as they could be brought by associations, including women's rights organizations, which were only required to present model cases. Victims that had not taken part in the group action could then request to be included in the initial ruling.

27. **Ms. Schulz** asked how the authorities ensured that persons who wished to claim asylum in France did not turn to smugglers to facilitate their journey to the country. Noting that there was often a gulf between what the law permitted and what actually happened in practice, she also asked what proportion of asylum claims handled under the fast-track procedure were shifted to the ordinary procedure. She pointed out that the former director of the National Institute for Demographic Research had decried the hypocrisy of the current statistics system and the gaps in knowledge that remained despite frequent in-depth studies.

28. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she was not convinced that administrative decentralization would truly facilitate the realization of women's rights at the local level without effective coordination with the central authorities. She regretted that the report lacked information on the overseas territories, which she would have liked to see represented in the delegation.

29. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that international instruments were included in the curricula of law students. In addition, considerable work had been carried out with the National College of the Judiciary and police academies to ensure that personnel who registered complaints were particularly made aware of issues involving violations of women's rights.

30. **Ms. Moiron-Braud** (France) said that the Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women Victims of Violence and for Combating Human Trafficking was mandated to take part in the development of a national training plan for all professionals likely to come into contact with women victims of violence. It had created four training kits designed for different target audiences, each consisting of a video and guide, which were accessible to persons with hearing impairments. All the training tools made ample reference to the Convention, and over 200,000 professionals had received training thus far. The Mission had also developed a model medical certificate for use as evidence in any subsequent investigation or trial and information booklets for women victims.

31. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said that the French Immigration and Integration Office, together with the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, had missions in Lebanon, Jordan, Greece and Italy to identify persons, especially women, who were liable to fall prey to smugglers. Steps were being taken to set up another such mission in Turkey. The Government had put in place special emergency measures in response to the Yazidi crisis. Many Yazidi women had been brought directly to France where they had been placed in special housing and given assistance tailored to their needs.

32. **Mr. Clavreul** (France), stressing that France was opposed to statistics on ethnicity because there was only one race, namely the human race, said that data could be collected on other useful characteristics, such as national origin, gender identity and religious belief. A scientific board made up of 20 high-level researchers and academics had been set up to improve the authorities' understanding of various issues. While it maintained the Government's position regarding race and ethnicity, it had stated that available data should be made public and be used more efficiently.

33. **Ms. Gilberg** (France) said that only associations that had been accredited for at least five years could bring a group action. However, the Civil Code did not prohibit class action suits for victims of discrimination.

34. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the delegation was competent to discuss the overseas territories and departments. While overseas departments were required to implement all provisions of French law, the two overseas territories could amend legislation and implement their own provisions. Separate reports on the two territories were contained in the addendum to the periodic report (CEDAW/C/FRA/7-8/Add.1).

35. **Ms. Alcade** (France) said that preparation for the interactive dialogue had involved representatives from the overseas departments and territories. While the State provided ongoing assistance to them, particularly with regard to funding, they were trusted to implement legislation according to their own cultures; cultural differences occasionally caused difficulties regarding women's rights. Their need to coordinate with neighbouring countries made decentralization a necessity.

36. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether the State party envisaged reducing the length of time that an association must have existed before being able to bring class action and whether that possibility would be extended to ad hoc groups.

37. **Ms. Gilberg** (France) said that it was unlikely that that requirement would be changed and there were no plans to allow ad hoc groups to bring class action.

38. **Ms. Haidar** said that the establishment of the Ministry of Families, Children and Women's Rights seemed to diminish the centrality of women's rights. She wished to know what proportion of the Ministry's human and financial resources were allocated to gender equality. She asked how the numerous sectoral plans relating to equality were coordinated, how their impact and accountability were measured and whether they had the necessary capacity, expertise and resources.

39. The High Council for Gender Equality appeared to be the only institution devoted exclusively to gender equality. She asked how competences were divided between the High Council, the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights and the Defender of Rights. She wished to know what resources were allocated to each of those bodies and what percentage of total public spending they received. She asked whether the High Council for Gender Equality had been established by law. The resources of the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights seemed insufficient. She wondered to what extent were its views implemented. She would appreciate information on the agents of the Defender of Rights, particularly concerning their presence throughout France and in the overseas departments and territories. Lastly, she asked whether the mandate of the Interministerial Committee against Racism and Anti-Semitism would be broadened to include Islamophobia.

40. **The Chair**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that while the requirement for gender parity in the Government was commendable, not all women benefited from it. She asked whether the State party envisaged adopting temporary special measures, including quotas, to ensure that disadvantaged groups were represented.

41. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that the multiple responsibilities of the Ministry of Families, Children and Women's Rights allowed it to ensure that all of its policies contributed to women's rights; for example, the provision of childcare allowed single mothers to work. Furthermore, it guaranteed consistency across related policies, such as those addressing violence against women and violence against children. The Ministry also covered all aspects of women's rights that did not relate to other policies, such as equality in the workplace and women entrepreneurs.

42. **Ms. Seydoux** (France) said that the interministerial policy on gender equality was coordinated by a department of the Directorate-General for Social Cohesion that implemented activities relating to the rights of women through its national network in France and the overseas departments and territories. The department also allocated resources; it had received €27 million in 2016, and €16 million had been allocated to overseas territories in recent years. The department also received and responded to feedback from the network regarding the situation on the ground. The network, which met several times a year, had been strengthened by recent reforms to overseas territories, and the Government had increased the budget for promoting gender equality policies significantly since 2012.

43. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that a network of high-ranking officials from all ministries had been established and met regularly. It produced annual equality road maps that described each ministry's policies on diversity and the promotion of women to positions of responsibility. The High Council for Gender Equality had been established by law in 2013 and its mission renewed in 2016. Although it had a staff of just five, all members were involved in producing its views and reports, and it worked closely with NGOs and civil society.

44. The Defender of Rights provided mediation between citizens and the authorities by considering individual cases that were referred to him or her, or submitted directly. He or she could also make general recommendations. Furthermore, 60 per cent of those recommendations were followed, and there was a positive outcome in 80 per cent of individual cases. The overall budget for the Defender of Rights was €27.5 million, although there was no specific breakdown for the amount spent in relation to the rights of women or statistics on the number of complaints of violations of their rights. However, there was evidence that complaints of discrimination on grounds of pregnancy, family situation or gender were increasing rapidly.

45. The National Consultative Commission for Human Rights was an independent authority that addressed all fundamental rights, including those relating to women and gender equality. Its resources had increased, although it was not known what proportion were dedicated to activities relating to the Convention.

46. **Mr. Clavreul** (France) said that 2015 had been marked by a significant increase in both anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attacks. Protection was a priority, and many mosques were monitored by the special services and the police. Efforts were being made to prevent all forms of racism, which was a crime and should be prosecuted as such, regardless of the perpetrator. Campaigns had been launched in schools and other settings to combat prejudice and highlight the contribution of Muslims to the country's history. Those measures had been successful; attacks had decreased by almost 80 per cent in the first five months of 2016 to the lowest levels since records had begun to be kept. Muslim women were the victims in most Islamophobic attacks; that trend was being monitored.

47. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said that in recent years, a great many mosques had been built thanks to legislation that allowed places of worship to be constructed at a low price and with public funding. Efforts had also been made to cater for Muslims in other areas, for example in the prison system and the armed forces.

48. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that while parity was ensured in elections with a list system by requiring the alternation of one man and one woman on candidate lists, that was not possible in elections in which only one candidate was returned in each constituency. Parties were fined if they failed to put forward a sufficient number of women candidates, although they occasionally preferred to pay the fine. Election lists in overseas departments and territories comprised local individuals, meaning that there was greater diversity among elected officials than in mainland France. However, the parity law had led to a fairer representation of French citizens in elections.

49. **Ms. Haidar** asked what percentage of the Government's overall budget was allocated to the Ministry of Families, Children and Women's Rights and the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights.

50. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that there were no statistics on the exact budget allocated to gender equality, which was promoted by all ministries and authorities. Local authorities were, however, required to report on their budget and plans for gender equality.

51. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that government spending on training and unemployment benefits for job-seeking women and direct government spending on children and families should also be added to the budget referred to in the cross-cutting policy paper on gender equality. The Government would endeavour to improve its cost accounting system with a view to tracking more closely the budgetary resources allocated to the implementation of the Convention, and to present the relevant figures in a more accessible manner to Parliament and the general public. Every effort would be made to include the figures in question in the country's next periodic report.

52. **Ms. Haidar** said that the absence of statistical data and a tool for measuring progress undermined the effectiveness of the State party's policy on gender equality. She hoped that the State party's next periodic report would contain more qualitative and quantitative data on the impact of the policy and the budgetary resources allocated to its implementation.

53. **Ms. Gabr** said that the continued prevalence of sexism in French society was chiefly attributable to the persistence of stereotypical attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of women, which, despite being less visible, were still very much a part of the national mindset.

54. The Committee was deeply concerned by the plight of migrant women and women from an immigrant or an ethnic minority background in view of the disturbing rise in xenophobia and Islamophobia following the recent influx of migrants into the country and the recent terrorist attacks. The stance on immigration adopted by certain political parties also served to exacerbate those phenomena. Furthermore, the social rejection of those women often exposed them to multiple forms of discrimination. Regrettably, the families of young migrant women or young women from an immigrant or ethnic minority background often played a role in reinforcing gender stereotypes by presenting traditional roles as the only option available to them, thereby curtailing their participation in French society and the full enjoyment of their rights. She asked how the State party facilitated the social integration of those young women while ensuring respect for their cultural identity and upbringing. It would be useful to receive statistical data on the number of acts of violence committed specifically against women.

55. Notwithstanding the reduction in the prevalence of female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage recorded in mainland France, she would be interested to know how many cases of such practices had been recorded abroad and what had been the State party's approach to stopping them given that it did not collect statistical data on the girls and young women who were most at risk.

56. Given the significant influence of the French press, she asked whether the State party planned to introduce a code of ethics aimed at ensuring respect for female journalists and to include a gender equality component in journalism courses. The high prevalence of sexism in the mass media and the limited participation and visibility of women in sports programmes and talk shows was also a cause for concern. She asked what progress the State party had made in eliminating negative stereotypes of women in the mass media and increasing the number of women playing a leading role in television and radio programmes.

57. Turning to the education sector, she asked how the impact of policies and programmes for the promotion of gender equality in schools and teacher training was assessed.

58. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she welcomed the adoption of Act of 13 April 2016 prohibiting the purchase of sexual services, which recognized prostitutes as victims of gender-based violence and forged a clear link between prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Noting that the Act provided for an exit strategy for the many women wishing to leave prostitution, she asked what interim and long-term support was provided to those women, both in terms of vocational training and psychosocial care. Could women who still engaged in prostitution also benefit from such support?

59. While acknowledging the role of the Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women Victims of Violence and for Combating Human Trafficking in mobilizing efforts to combat all forms of violence against women, she wished to know whether the national action plan to combat human trafficking for the period 2014-2016 had succeeded in strengthening prosecution and international cooperation, and whether police officers had been provided with training on dealing with the crime of human trafficking and upholding the rights of victims.

60. Noting that, under the Code of Entry and Residence of Aliens and the Right to Asylum, female victims of trafficking could be issued with a temporary residence permit if they cooperated with the police, she asked whether female victims of trafficking who were not willing to cooperate were consequently denied such a residence permit. The Committee was also concerned over how few cases of human trafficking were reported, how few investigations were conducted and how few convictions for that crime were obtained. Moreover, it appeared that the efforts devoted to identifying potential victims of trafficking,

collecting the necessary statistical data and addressing human trafficking for purposes other than sexual exploitation were insufficient. She asked how the State party intended to remedy those shortcomings and to ensure effective coordination and the availability of adequate human and financial resources to tackle all forms of human trafficking occurring in the country.

61. **Ms. Rossignol** (France) said that, although France already had a robust legislative framework for promoting gender equality, the Government was conscious of the need to adapt it to changing needs and the constantly evolving situation on the ground. To that end, it had adopted new measures to facilitate access to justice and to combat negative gender stereotypes. Despite the progress made in reducing their prevalence, women continued to encounter negative gender stereotypes and sexism in all sectors of society and in their interpersonal relationships. It should be recalled that negative gender stereotypes and sexism affected both men and women.

62. The Government had used the statistical data on the participation and representation of women in television and radio programmes compiled by the Higher Council for the Audiovisual Sector to formulate and include gender equality targets in the agreements that it concluded with State-run television and radio networks. A recently adopted law would allow the Government to take a similar approach when concluding agreements with advertising companies. However, sexism could not be fought solely through the adoption of legislative measures. It was necessary to educate and spur into action persons and entities that continued to transmit sexist stereotypes and portray women in a negative light. The Government worked in partnership with representatives of the media and advertising industry to devise ways and means of eradicating sexist stereotypes from their work. It also devoted efforts to encouraging women and their supporters to fight against sexist stereotypes wherever they encountered them. A large-scale campaign to address negative gender stereotypes and sexism in all sectors would be launched in late 2016. In France, all citizens were entitled to protection against racism and hate crimes, irrespective of their religion or beliefs, and to exercise their right to free speech, opinion and expression.

63. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry for Women's Rights, oversaw efforts to combat gender stereotypes at all levels of education.

64. **Ms. Pétreault** (France) said that one of the main aims of the French education system was to promote gender equality through combating gender stereotypes from the earliest age. In late 2016, a new moral and civic education programme, which included a gender equality component, would be introduced for students at all levels. Under the national action plan to promote gender equality in schools, teaching staff were provided with special teaching materials and training on a continuous basis. Gender equality objectives were also being integrated into school development plans. The effectiveness of those and other measures taken under the plan was assessed by the national education inspectorate through visits to schools and through dialogues held with the decentralized education authorities. There were also plans to introduce a new system for collecting information relating to gender equality in schools. An increase in the uptake of subjects or courses that were traditionally the domain of one particular sex by members of the opposite sex could also serve as an indicator for progress towards achieving gender equality in education. Furthermore, a new methodology for appointing members to secondary school student councils would soon be introduced to ensure that a more even number of boys and girls served on such councils. The number of girls occupying a position of responsibility on such councils could also serve as an indicator for gender equality in schools.

65. **Mr. Leschi** (France) said that the Government was aware of the prevailing negative perception of migrant women and women from an immigrant or minority background in French society. When conducting programmes to assist new migrants, the competent

authorities impressed upon migrant women and their families that, in France, religious law had no place in State policies or government affairs and that they were required to abide by French civil law and to respect the rights of women enshrined in it, regardless of their religious affiliation.

66. **Ms. Gisand** (France) said that the Act of 5 August 2013 had introduced two new offences related to female genital mutilation to the Criminal Code. Firstly, any person who made any kind of promise or offered gifts or other incentives to a minor, or pressurized him or her into undergoing an act of genital mutilation, or, secondly, who incited a third party to perform such an act on a minor, even when the act was not performed, was liable to 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of €75,000. The penalties prescribed by the Criminal Code for female genital mutilation varied according to the impact of the act on the victim and whether any aggravating circumstances applied. However, the Criminal Code punished such acts regardless of motive or the religious or cultural background of the perpetrator. The perpetrator of the mutilation and the guardian of the mutilated child could face prosecution for acts of violence causing mutilation or permanent disability and, if convicted, were liable to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of €150,000. The penalty was increased to 15 years if the permanent mutilation was performed on a minor who was under 15 years of age and to 20 years if the perpetrator was an ascendant or other relative of the minor or a person having authority over him or her.

67. **Ms. Laurens** (France) said that a campaign to prevent forced marriage abroad had been launched in 2014 and that a dedicated e-mail address, managed by French consular officials, had been set up for reporting actual or suspected cases of forced marriage. Cases of actual or suspected forced marriage were typically reported by family members, friends, associations working in that area or educators. In 2015, around 40 forced marriages had been reported, the vast majority of which had been annulled by a judge. Upon receiving a report of an actual or suspected forced marriage, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took steps to prevent the minor from leaving the national territory and, if that was no longer possible, coordinated with the consular officials in the country in question to prevent the forced marriage and to facilitate the return of the minor to France. French consular officials received special training on the appropriate procedures for handling cases of forced marriage. Guidelines on how to care for and support victims of forced marriage and on how to detect lack of consent in marriages entered into abroad had also been issued. However, only a small proportion of the victims of forced marriage were returned to France owing to a lack of awareness of the phenomenon and the established procedures for addressing it. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was aware of the need to step up its efforts in that area and, to that end, had organized a special awareness-raising event in November 2015. The foreign travel advice web page of the Ministry included information on the risks of forced marriage. An interministerial guide on the risks associated with female genital mutilation and how to support victims abroad had also been published.

68. **Mr. Vinquant** (France) said that the Act of 13 April 2016 prohibiting the purchase of sexual services and thereby recognizing prostitutes as victims of gender-based violence served as an important tool for the implementation of the national plan to combat violence against women and the national action plan to combat human trafficking for the period 2014-2016.

69. **Ms. Seydoux** (France) said that the exit strategy for women wishing to leave prostitution was a key component of the aforementioned Act, as it offered them an effective and sustainable alternative to that practice. Some €2.6 million had been allocated for the implementation of the strategy through a dedicated fund. Departmental prefects and a group of relevant professionals were responsible for implementing the strategy. A special committee decided on a case-by-case basis whether a woman wishing to leave prostitution met the requirements to benefit from the services and assistance available under the strategy.

Specialized associations provided women with accommodation, medical care, psychological support, childcare services and facilitated their reintegration into the labour market. Under the strategy, foreign women who were in an irregular situation and therefore unable to access social security benefits or legally work were provided with a subsistence allowance and a residence permit, which could be renewed when their case was reviewed after six months. If a woman wishing to leave prostitution stopped frequenting the association to which she had been assigned, her entitlement to services and assistance under the exit strategy was suspended, not revoked. She could continue to benefit from those services and assistance if and when she decided to return, provided that the term of her entitlement had not expired. The legislation necessary for the full implementation of the exit strategy would enter into force either in late 2016 or early 2017.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.